

Reducing the Health Impact From Former Methamphetamine Labs in Kentucky: Executive Summary

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“Meth,” “speed,” “crank,” “chalk,” “go-fast,” “zip,” “cristy,” “ice,” “crystal,” “glass,” or “quartz.” Methamphetamine usage has been prominent in the United States for the past 8 years. This trend has been spreading west to east impacting urban and rural settings. Methamphetamine may be more disruptive than other drugs because in addition to problems related to its use, methamphetamine creates a host of problems related to its local production. (1) It has health impact as well as economical impacts. The health impacts effect all ages, races, gender and social classes. Further, this drug possesses a unique problem with its production, because of the inherent dangers of the drug recipes and the waste left behind by the meth cookers.

In Kentucky, after a lab is busted a gross cleanup is initiated by the KY State Police. This cleanup is thorough but it leaves residual waste in the residence; “Though found in small amounts, meth lab contaminants may pose health threats to persons exposed to them.” (2)

An increase in meth production has caused an increase in the number of homes, apartments, hotels, motels, etc that are contaminated sites. Many of these sites are not being cleaned up in Kentucky; these sites are creating a health hazard to Kentuckians with unknown chronic outcomes.

Through convening a multi agency workgroup, Kentucky will strive to provide educational materials to all stakeholders in Kentucky, outreach to LHD’s staff impacted by former meth labs, provide guidance documents for legislative approach, and interim-guidance for citizens and public health workers. Our overarching approach will be to provide guidance to LHD’s and citizens and ultimately providing recommendations via a guidance document on cleanup to Kentucky’s General Assembly for promulgation.

Our workgroup implemented and distributed interim cleanup guidance to all the local health departments in Kentucky. We have also been able to create a rough draft of the guidance document that will be submitted to the General Assembly in the 2006 session. The workgroup has been an overarching collaboration reaching across agencies structural and political lines.

At a local level we worked towards defining our roles and responsibilities during a meth lab response, through work groups, tabletop exercises, emergency drills and creation of meth lab response guidelines for Louisville Metro. This created a more organized emergency response by Police, Fire, EMS, Health and other agencies, resulting in less time on scene, working together better, and a greater awareness of hazards, injuries and health effects occurring during meth lab responses. This also ensures fewer responders being exposed to contaminants and proper notification of meth lab sites to the local Health Department for follow-up to reduce environmental contamination and exposure to the future residents.

The state has much work to do to protect the citizens from meth contaminated sites; work is being done to improve this environment. We will work to submit this guidance to General Assembly and

will work on educating the legislature on the dangerous environment placed upon our children, elderly and communities.

References

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2. Wrightson, Rick. "Methamphetamine Frequently Asked Questions." KCI: The Anti-Meth Site. http://www.kci.org/meth_info/faq_meth.htm